

RETROFIT CASHIER COUNTER

CLAIM TO PRIORITY

The present application claims priority to United States Provisional Application No.
5 60/457,248, filed March 25, 2003, and entitled "RETRO-FIT CASHIER COUNTER." The
identified provisional patent application is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to countertops. More particularly, the present
10 invention relates to a countertop for use in checkout lanes at retail establishments.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

When shopping for various retail products, for example grocery items, it is necessary to
purchase those products in a checkout line. Checkout lines invariably have a countertop on
15 which consumers may place their checkbooks or other means of payment and on which checks
may be written or credit or debit card receipts signed.

Through the course of their useful lives, these existing countertops sustain prolonged
abuse and as a result are scratched, marked up, pitted, chipped, and may have various tape
fragments or stickers on them, hindering the ability of consumers to use them for their intended
20 purpose. Further, these worn countertops are not attractive to consumers and therefore are a
liability to stores.

What is needed and what this invention provides is a replacement countertop to supplant or retrofit these existing worn countertops and provide a neat, clean, attractive appearance for the consumer. What is further required is a countertop that will provide a noticeable area for display of advertisements, increasing the transfer of information to consumers and providing an additional revenue stream to the retailers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a replacement countertop that requires little effort to install, is particularly suited to resist damage from repeated use, and provides attractive and effective advertising space. The countertop of the present invention is also manufactured in a single size that fits substantially all existing retail store countertops, allowing stores to standardize this feature of their checkout lines. The countertop generally includes a support tray that is mounted onto existing countertops. The support tray accommodates multiple advertisements protected by a contact surface that further provides a steady, clean area for writing out checks and signing receipts.

In particular the retrofit cashier counter includes a base and a transparent contact surface. The base includes a well that is configured to shroudably receive the length, width and depth of an existing countertop. Additionally, the base includes a base panel that is mountable to the existing countertop. The base panel also presents an advertisement surface. The transparent contact surface is removably positionable atop the advertisement surface.

Other features of the retrofit cashier counter include: a plurality of surrounding walls that are presented by the base to maintain the transparent contact surface in position atop the

advertisement surface; an advertisement surface that is dividable into a number of different advertising sections; a clearance area that is provided between the advertisement surface and the transparent contact surface; and a base that is configured to shroudably receive any of numerous differently-sized existing countertops.

5 A retrofit cashier counter of the present invention may also be described as including a means for shrouding, a means for securing, and a means for transparently covering. The means for shrouding shrouds the existing cashier counter and at least a portion of the means for shrouding presents advertising to a consumer. The means for securing secures the means for shrouding to the existing cashier counter. The means for transparently covering covers the
10 portion of the means for shrouding that presents advertising to a consumer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of the countertop according to an embodiment of the present invention.

15 Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the countertop with multiple advertisements.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the support tray.

Fig. 4 is a top view of the support tray.

Fig. 5 is a side view of the support tray.

Fig. 6 is a perspective view of a conventional countertop.

20

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A countertop according to the present invention is shown generally at 10 in the figures. The countertop consists of a support tray 20 and a contact surface 50.

Referring to Figs. 1, 3, and 4, the support tray 20 consists of a confrontable base panel 22,
5 two side boards 24, a front board 26, and a rear board 28.

The base panel 22 presents a base panel bottom face 30 and a base panel top face 32. Referring to Figs. 3 and 6, the base panel bottom face 30 is confrontable to and mountable on an existing countertop surface 62 of a general existing countertop 60. The base panel top face 32 forms a surface for any advertisements or other communications.

10 The boards 24, 26, and 28 are connected at their respective ends to form a rectangular enclosure 34. Other shapes and configurations can be utilized in alternate embodiments. Referring to Figs. 3, 5, and 6, the base panel 22 is situated within the rectangular enclosure 34 to form the structure of support tray 20. As a result, a well 40 is formed for shroudable engagement of the existing countertop 60. Referring to Figs. 3 and 4, the edges of boards 24, 26, and 28 as
15 well as the corners that join side boards 24 with front board 26 and rear board 28 can be rounded to prevent possible injury from sharp edges.

The base panel 22 and boards 24, 26, and 28 are preferably made of plastic, such as polycarbonate. The use of polycarbonate in one embodiment allows for a high degree of strength and durability as well as the ability to color match the support tray 20 to the particular retailer's
20 need. Other suitable and generally rigid materials may be used if desired.

Referring again to Figs. 3 and 5, the well 40 that is formed is deep enough so that existing countertops currently on the market may be covered with a single size countertop. In one

embodiment, the support tray 20 has a lengthwise dimension of approximately twenty-two and one-half inches, a width of slightly over nine and one-half inches, and a depth of one and one-quarter inch. Other compatible dimensions are envisioned as well.

Referring to Figs. 3, 4 and 5, a plurality of attachment holes 44 are used to secure the support tray 20 to the existing countertop, thereby providing a steady, even surface for the consumer. In one embodiment, the attachment mechanism for securing support tray 20 to the existing countertop is screws, which are countersunk into the base panel top face 32 to form a smooth, continuous surface upon which to place advertisements. Other known fasteners and fastening techniques can be employed without deviating from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

Referring to Figs. 2 and 3, a contact surface 50 is positioned over any advertisements that are placed on the base panel top face 32. The contact surface 50 is preferably made of a clear plastic, such as Plexiglas[®]. In one embodiment, the contact surface 50 is placed over the advertisements with sufficient clearance such that any of various small, thin implements may be used to remove contact surface 50 when necessary to change out the underlying materials. However, it should be noted that other embodiments may provide enhanced means of extraction. For example, a plurality of lift tabs may be used to elevate the Plexiglas[®], or lengthwise slots may be formed in any of boards 24, 26, or 28, into which one or more edges of the contact surface 50 could be laterally introduced, thereby providing an increased clearance area for a larger implement, such as a fingertip, to lift the contact surface 50. Fastening and snap-engagement of the contact surface 50 are also envisioned.

In yet another embodiment, at least one divider 52 as shown in Figs. 1 and 2 may be employed to further compartmentalize the support surface into one or more separate advertising areas. Divider 52 would preferably be made of plastic, such as polycarbonate; however, other suitable materials may be used if desired.

5 Referring to Figs. 3 and 6, in operation, the support tray 20 of the present invention is inverted and placed over an existing countertop such that the base panel bottom face 30 is confronting the existing countertop surface 62. Referring to Figs. 1, 3, and 6, the existing countertop is thereby shrouded by the well 40. A plurality of fasteners, such as screws, are mounted within attachment holes 44 and the support tray 20 is thereby secured to the existing
10 countertop 60. One or more advertisements can then be laid over the base panel top face 32 of the support tray 20 in the manner most desired by the retailer. The contact surface 50 is then placed over the advertisements.

It is contemplated that features disclosed in this application, can be mixed and matched to suit particular circumstances. Various other modifications and changes will be apparent to those
15 of ordinary skill.

The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit of the essential attributes thereof; therefore, the illustrated embodiment should be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, reference being made to the appended claims rather than to the foregoing description to indicate the scope of the invention.